

THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORIES.

DISCOURSE

BY

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"Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."—PSALM 144: 1.

You can not have failed to notice how small a part of the peculiar rhetoric of war has ever come from the great makers and masters of war. The contending heroes of the Iliad simply go out to meet each other under the walls of Troy. It is left for the poet to tell us how they rushed together like thunder-clouds in a summer sky. The nine campaigns of Cæsar in Gaul turned out very much to his mind, but his own account of them in the *Commentaries* is probably not very much like the reports which would have been sent by the Roman Russell to the Roman *Times*, had Rome at that time either enjoyed or endured either a Russell or a *Times*. We have a General who threatens nothing more than to "move upon the works" of the enemy. For the "tornado" and "lightning" of the movement we are indebted to the sprightly correspondents, special or regular, who take no part in it only to see it. There is nothing strange in this, and nothing to be sneered at. Battles may be grand when looked at from afar, and grander still in their results; but to those who are in them they are hideous, and those who know the most about them are inclined to say the least. Louis Napoleon is said to have had his stomach turned, and his dreams badly haunted ever since, by the slaughter he witnessed at Solferino.

The author of the sentence chosen for our text to-day was at once a great poet and a great conqueror. When he received his kingdom, it was only a small fraction even of Palestine. And at last, after seven years, with all the Hebrews under him, it reached only to the roots of Lebanon on the north, touched the Arabian desert on the south, and went but little

beyond the Jordan on the east. But before he died, the Red Sea and the Euphrates were his boundaries, and there was no potentate anywhere in Western Asia who did not tremble at the name of the shepherd's son of Bethlehem.

Now what had this man to say of war? Many things in many places, as he who runs may read, but in our text two things: First, virtually, that war is sometimes a good thing; and, secondly, that success in it is of God. "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

To-day, at the suggestion of the President—the President of these nearly forty United States of North-America—we have thanked and are thanking God, thanking him in speech, and in feeling deeper than speech, for two most signal and pregnant victories: the one at Mobile on our Southern Gulf, where Army and Navy, planting the feet of our national power, the one upon the land, the other upon the sea, have had a united triumph; the other at Atlanta in Georgia, where, after four months of incessant marching and fighting, a shell has been lodged at last in the very bowels of this monstrous Confederacy. These are great victories, there can be no doubt of it; as great as any in history. They do not end the rebellion, to be sure; but they begin the ending of it. A few more such blows, and the work is substantially accomplished. And so we bless God to-day, in this temple of peace, for these achievements of war, gratefully remembering the dead, tenderly mindful of the wounded and the bereaved, and, above all, humbly supplicating the Power above us for what further victories are needed to

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bring this great and sore struggle to a righteous consummation, disband our brave and patient but wearied armies, and set in motion again the arrested currents of our ordinary life.

You can not regret more deeply than I that your own spiritual teacher is not here now to lead your devotions, and expound the lessons of the hour. And yet I will not distrust your charity, nor permit myself to be troubled by the fear that you may be yearning for something better than you will get. I am sure you will not be impatient with me for not doing better than I can, snatching time as I do for this discourse from the grasp of other duties and other cares.

I. Let me first speak to you about war in general.

The Bible speaks of it in many, many places as one of the direst of calamities. Those who employ the Litany of the English Church pray every Sunday: "From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from *battle* and murder, and from *sudden death*, Good Lord deliver us." And such is the common feeling of civilized and cultured, to say nothing of regenerated and Christian, men. War, as I have said already, is a hideous thing. Our instincts are against it. As rational beings we resent this appeal from reason to the sword, from brain to muscle, as an atrocious indignity to reason itself. It makes us ashamed of men to see them hunting each other, as the sportsman hunts a tiger in the jungle; to see them tear each other to pieces, as tiger tears tiger when both are famished, and are both unwilling to divide their spoil. Swords, and pistols, and muskets, and cannon, and bullets, and balls, and forts, and iron-plated ships, with all the other inventions which mean death to man, are more hateful than any human abhorrence has ever painted them. War, in and of itself, in its last analysis, is simply butchery; the butchery, not of soulless animals like sheep and oxen, but of reasoning and immortal men. Shame on it all. And the greater the war, the greater the shame. In great, long wars, the waste of life is frightful. Five millions of men, it is estimated, perished in the Crusades. An equal number of Frenchmen fell victims to the military genius of the First Napoleon. Farmers, mechanics, merchants, scholars, are torn away from their beneficent pursuits to fatten corn-fields, as at Waterloo; perhaps to be of less use even than that. And the gaps thus made in society are not filled for a generation. And then there are multitudes on crutches, or maimed and limping, till nature has had time to put them all under the sod. And then there are delicate women, dressed in black, in our sight for years, pensioned, it may be, meagerly, or it may be painfully living by the needle, making shirts at five cents apiece for men who had made fortunes out of the war which cost them their husbands. And then there are little children to grow up, weeping every night when they are put to bed as they are told of their fathers, who had their lives shot or stabbed out of them on some far off battle-field, and whose bodies are not asleep at home in the village graveyard. And then there is absolute annihilation of prop-

erty; charcoal, niter, sulphur in the powder that is burnt; lead and iron in the bullets and balls; and a hundred other things, which get planted in every battle, not to grow, but to rot. Harvest-fields are trampled to mud, houses and barns are consumed, railways torn up, engines and cars demolished, ships sunk or set fire to with their cargoes, light-houses blown up, and harbors obstructed or destroyed. And then, too, there is great peril of serious damage to the moral character. There is the life in camp, away from all domestic endearments and restraints; and raids through hostile territory, sweeping property like whirlwinds; and the fury of battle, so liable to kindle a thirst for blood, or at least to cheapen the value of human life. Such are some of the fruits and tokens of war. War means death and destruction: death, violent and sudden; destruction, utter and irreparable. In this aspect of it, it is hard to imagine any worse thing which could possibly happen. Satanic and hellish some men have called it. But Milton thinks otherwise, and worse, of it:

"O shame to men! devil with devil damned
Firm concord holds, men only disagree
Of creatures rational."

But bad as war is, some other things are worse, immeasurably worse. And when war and any one of these other worse things is the only and enforced alternative, then is war a right and a good thing; with all its abominations it is right, with all its horrors it is good. War, we have said, is death and destruction; but the death only of the body, the destruction only of property. Even at this, however, the loss is not so great as may at first appear. Death will come sooner or later to us all. The man who falls in battle only dies a little sooner than he expected. Property likewise is perishable. War only sweeps it away more swiftly. But rated at their highest value, neither life nor property should be thought inalienable. Life is sweet and property is good, but life and property may be too dearly ransomed. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And souls may be lost without being sent to perdition beyond the grave; reaching that perdition doubtless at last, but *lost* some time before.

With respect to the Christian martyrdoms, I believe there is nowhere any debate. No man dares to say, if any man is mean enough to think, that those uncompromising saints who preferred death to apostasy, died foolishly. That one early martyr at the stake in Smyrna, the aged Polycarp, states the case for them all. On his way to the flames, Herod, an official, with his father Nicetes, met him in their chariot. Lifting the venerable Bishop into the chariot, they say: "What harm is there in it to say, Lord Cæsar, and sacrifice, and so be safe?" Afterward the proconsul urged him: "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty; reproach Christ." But his answer was: "Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" And so he lost a life which a single sentence would have saved.

But so he won everlasting bliss in heaven, and on earth everlasting renown; here the laurel, and there the palm.

But it may be said that the difference is wide between yielding up one's own life and taking the life of another; between martyrdom and war. The commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill;" and war, we are told, is murder. But if mere killing be murder, my reply is, then it is murder to hang a murderer; as some, indeed, are quite ready to affirm, denouncing scaffold and battle-field as alike unchristian. This is logical, but false; a right conclusion from a wrong premise. "Thou shalt not kill" does not mean, "Thou shalt not take away life." But, as expounded by our Lord himself, its meaning is, "Thou shalt do no murder." Murder is more than killing. Killing is sometimes not merely a right, but a duty, even for individuals, as when one anticipates by a quick blow of his own the blow of an assassin. And if an individual may take life in self-defense, much more may it be done by the body politic, with its formalities of arrest and trial. In the face of murder, treason, or any other capital offence, the commandment is, "Thou shalt kill." Magistracy is nothing without its sword. That sword may not always be reddened justly; but justly reddened, it does the will of God, who complacently permits no magistrate to bear the sword in vain. Occasions arise when organized society must either kill or be killed itself; and organized society must not consent to die.

Now war is nothing more nor less than capital punishment on a large scale: sometimes outside, between nation and nation, when we call it foreign war; sometimes inside, when we call it civil. The chief difference is, that on the scaffold there is but one executioner, while on the battle-field the executioners are many. In either case, it is the organized society that strikes, on the scaffold with its single hand of civil justice, on the field with its many mailed hands of war. But sheriff or soldier, it matters not, they are equally legitimate. War, then, with all its evils, is not in itself wrong. In particular instances it may be wrong, or it may be right; but each instance must be judged of by itself. Our proper rule of judgment would appear to be, that war, to be righteous, must be always defensive war. Defensive, I mean, in spirit; for it is obvious that a war may be offensive in form, which is strictly defensive in spirit, as in the case of Charlemagne, who repeatedly attacked and crippled the Barbarians, who were preparing to attack, and might have crippled him. The alternative before him was not that of peace or war, but of war to-day or war to-morrow; and the choice he made was of war to-day. Offences have not yet ceased between nation and nation, any more than they have ceased between man and man; nor will they cease for some time to come. Nation still insults and injures nation. The insulted and injured nation may exercise a long forbearance, protesting against its wrongs; but there is a limit beyond which forbearance is not a virtue, but a crime. That limit overstepped, of which the Christian conscience of the nation must calmly judge, then the blade must leave its scabbard,

and the God of battles must be invoked to arbitrate the conflict. International offenses, no longer endurable, must be punished. For some offenses, the lighter punishment of commercial non-intercourse may suffice. But other offenses of a graver character cry aloud for the crowning punishment of war. And war for a nation's rights, when those rights are at once vital and jeopardized, is always a war of self-defense; in its essence that, whatever may be its form. Such war, we declare, is right. It is more than right: it is a duty. And the nation which shirks this duty deserves its inevitable doom; I say, its inevitable doom, for whatever nation is afraid to fight, and is known to be afraid to fight, forfeits the respect of other nations and is near its end. The vultures will soon be screaming over it.

But if a nation may defend itself on the outside against foreign assailants, much more may a nation defend itself on the inside against domestic traitors and rebels. Civil war, as all the world knows, is worse than foreign war; as much worse as a wolf in the fold is worse than a wolf at the door. It is more ferocious and bitter in its spirit, more desolating in its effects. It furrows the land with a hotter plowshare, and plants it with larger armies of the slain. Its havoc, as in the last days of the Roman Republic, as in the last days of the French Republic, is often arrested only by the iron hand of a despot, enforcing order at the expense of ancient liberties and rights. There are great miseries, and great risks. But when a wanton rebellion, long brooded over, is at length hatched, when constitutional and peaceful methods of redress for alleged grievances are haughtily spurned, when the national flag is insulted, and the national authority defied, then civil war must come; has, indeed, already come. It is the national life that is threatened: and if that life is worth having, it is worth defending. If there be fire in the nation's heart, that fire must burst and burn. If there be nerve in the nation's arm, that arm must strike. It is no longer a question of parties, which shall rule, whether this or that, but the supreme and final question of life or death to the State itself. Unresisted assassination is virtual suicide. A great nation has no right to die; and the greater the nation, the greater the wrong of allowing itself to be made to die. Lost wealth may be shortly recovered, slaughtered millions of men may by and by be replaced; but the splendid living organism of a high-hearted, prosperous, puissant nationality, with all its array of arts and industries, of laws and institutions, of grand historic memories and of still grander aspirations, which challenge the coming centuries, the dust of heroes in its soil, and the feet of heroes upon it, is no poor, easily accomplished work of man, but a slow growth of reluctant time, a wondrous miracle of Providence, which may not be witnessed again on the same spot for ages. It must not be suffered to perish. By all that is sacred in heaven, by all that is brave, sweet, and precious on earth, by the sleeping ashes of the fathers, by the cradles of the children, by all the examples of the past, by all the prowess of the present, by all the prophetic visions of the future, it must not be suffered to perish.

But war, in such emergencies as we have now considered, is also another aspect than this of tragic and terrible necessity. It has its compensations, greatest always in the greatest and grandest conflicts, which go far to make us bless even the bitterness of the bud for the sweetness of the flower. If war, by withdrawing largely the muscle of a country from productive pursuits to a pursuit whose very genius is destruction, deranges business, choking up the old channels of trade, it, on the other hand, opens new channels of its own. Armies must be clothed, and sheltered, and nourished; navies must be launched; and iron throats on the land and on the sea must be fed with powder, and lead, and iron. And, above all, if men are mowed down by regiments, and sorrow carried to innumerable homes, yet heroes are made for history, and the life of the nation is enriched by the lives of its champions. If some weak statesmen are broken down by the burden, others are found to bear it. If frogs croak, and wise owls hoot, in the night of disaster, birds of promise come singing in the morning. If some moral interests are imperiled, others and greater ones are promoted. What would England have been to-day without her righteous wars, domestic and foreign? England, or any other of the first nations of Europe? What but "a nation of shopkeepers;" a swarm of bees, living their honey; a herd of cattle, chewing their cuds? That is a great day for a man, when he puts his life in peril for a principle. That is a great day for a people, when they stand up for their rights. As men now are, and as the world now goes with them, a long peace, such as the merchant prays for, is more dangerous to the soul than battles are to the body. Peace is a hot summer, teeming with life, and hurrying its crops to ripeness, but drying up the brooks, wrapping the land in smoke, and robbing the air of its tonics. War is lightning. And lightning is good. It may kill a horse or two in the pasture, or burn a barn, or prostrate a man standing in his doorway, or, striking a church, may turn, for some months, a Christian congregation quite out of doors; but it clears the air, and without it we should none of us have long to live.

War, then, with all the losses and horrors that attend it, with all the sorrows that follow it, is not always to be denounced, is not always to be shunned. King David was no stranger to war, making verses about it from afar. The nations round about him would not let him alone in Palestine. His own sons stirred up rebellions against him. And so he became a warrior, fighting for his kingdom and his crown; warrior, as well as lyricist, singing as he returned from victory: "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."

II. Let me next speak to you about the secret of success in war.

Napoleon is commonly reported to have said that Providence is always on the side of the heaviest battalions. I am slow to believe he ever said it. He must have known better, for he was not ignorant of history. The fact is, rather, that the heaviest battalions are always on

the side of Providence; not, I admit, in all the preliminary or incidental skirmishes, not in all the smaller battles even, but certainly in all the greater, decisive battles which have settled any thing worth settling. Many a time have little armies beaten large armies; as at Marathon and Plataea, the Greeks the Persians, who outnumbered them as ten to one. Who knows, or can know, which are the heaviest battalions, till it be found out which did the crushing, and which were crushed? David, though a stripling, was taller than Saul, and weighed more than Goliath. But his stature was not in inches by the rule, nor his weight in ounces by the scales. The Kearsarge and Alabama were more nearly matched than is often the case in naval engagements of that sort. As they steamed towards each other, with sanded decks and shotted guns, it would have been difficult to determine which was the better ship, or which was the better equipped, officered, and manned. An hour later it was all plain enough. No intelligent man in Christendom now needs to be told which ship went down, nor why. Patriotism commanded and worked the one; piracy commanded and worked the other.

One of the finest sayings of modern literature is that of Schiller: "The world's history is the world's judgment." It condenses into a proverb the whole philosophy of history. And yet, nearly three thousand years before, another poet had written: "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." For us, as individuals, there is a great day of judgment to come, with trumpet of archangel, and banner of flame, and book of God's memory and ours. But for races and nations, the day of judgment, like Elias to the Hebrews hundreds of years ago, is come already. It has come, and stays. It is now, and always. From the moment a nation is born, from that moment it begins to be judged. Nations, indeed, are free, liking what they will, and doing what they like. Hence, as human nature is always the same, human events are always repeating themselves. There is nothing new under the sun; but ever the same old circuit of growth and decay, of conquest and defeat. So at first it seems, and so in part, but only in part, it is. Besides the movement round, there is another movement onward, making the circuits spiral. And that spiral movement is of God, impelling the nations onward, while they go spinning round and round. The goal we know: it is the final triumph here on earth of truth and right over lies and wrong. Towards that goal the revolving nations have always pointed their fingers, and have always moved. I am not addressing atheists, and therefore I shall not now undertake to prove that the law of history is not revolution only, but also progress. Suffice it here to say, that the vindication of our Christian philosophy of history is the whole substance of history itself, its wood and its warp. Since the fall of man, which had its organic culmination in the godless civilization

of Adam's eldest son, as far back as we can see through the eyes of Herodotus, as far back as we can see through the eyes of Moses, the world has not revolved only, but also advanced. Not always from generation to generation, but always from age to age, from great epoch to great epoch, has there been one steady march. Any school-boy will recite you the names and the dates. Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Macedon, and Rome, those names of the old empires, all witnesses to progress, all witnesses for God, that he has ruled amongst the nations, and compelled them, in the working out of their own ambitious purposes, also to work out his purposes of justice and of grace. Amidst those older empires, Palestine stood central. For hundreds of years five millions of Hebrews determined the course of history. It was to train, to try, and finally to punish them, that those empires came and went. And now it is the son of a Hebrew mother, who is also the Son of God, around whom the nations revolve, and whose purposes they execute, whether they will or no. His kingdom, set up eighteen hundred years ago, has been steadily growing ever since. It is stronger to-day than ever it was before. It will be stronger to-morrow than it is to-day. Greece helped it in her decrepitude, and died only when she could help it no longer. Rome also helped it, and Rome also died when she could help it no longer. And so of all the nations since: the empire of Charlemagne, the medieval kingdoms of Europe, the empires of the two Napoleons, and all the rest. Each has had its own inspiration, each its own aims, but of God all have had only one and the same errand. They have either bowed or been broken, will bow or be broken, beneath the weight of Christ's arm, by the eternal covenant of redemption, this world is Christ's. He died for it, and he will have it. The past guarantees the future. Since those tongues of flame at Pentecost till now, not a single important event has happened which has not done something towards bringing in the promised millennium. Every national birth and every national death, every revolution and every reform, every discovery and every conquest, every invention and every battle, every science and every art, has had its Christian errand, and has done it. The Roman Empire built roads for the feet of the apostles and early evangelists, and kept order in their assemblies. Charlemagne repeated in northern Europe the southern empire of the Cæsars. Priests and schoolmen redeemed the Middle Ages from utter barbarism. Then out of the feudal chaos sprang the modern kingdoms of Europe, which, for these last three centuries, have been elaborating the Christian civilization that now rules the world. Study closely this chart of history, tracing the career of every nation and of every great ruler of every nation, and you will find but one key to the problem of their fortunes. The race has not been to the swift nor the battle to the strong. But the blood of Christ has been beating in the arteries of the world. Truth, right, law, liberty—these have been the light and the life of men, making the foolish wise and the weak strong, so that one has been able to chase a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight.

And of all the methods employed to bring the world right, there is none, perhaps, more effective, surely none so imposing, as this war. It is, indeed, a rough method, the delight of the savage, the dread of the civilized, and yet the appointment of Providence as the indispensable condition of human progress. The onward movement of the race has been always, not a journey, but a march. The new territories have had to be conquered. Wiser laws, humaner institutions, liberties enlarged and chartered, order assured—these all have been the crimsoned trophies of war. Even peace itself has had to be purchased with blood and tears. And so it is that the great military campaigns of history are its great waymarks. The great battles are but synonyms of great ideas realized. It is no new thing for bayonets to think; they have always thought, thinking better and better from age to age. It is the brains behind the bayonets that are thinking now. The devil rages, but God reigns; and what is best for man is sure to win in the long run. "He always wins who sides with God." In the great crises of history, when the clock of the universe is about to strike a new hour, it matters not what splendor or genius in leadership, what weight of massed columns, what prodigality of preparation, what prestige of previous achievement, may be set in array against the right; unseen squadrons are in the air above, unseen chariots in the mountains round about, and the battle is the Lord's—both the battle and the victory. Napoleon could never understand why his army was routed at Waterloo. By all military precedent, the rout should have been upon the other side. Napoleon was never surer of victory than then. But besides his army against him on the ground, there was his army against him in the air. The stars in seven courses fought against him, and he was vanquished. A bad cause may be successful at the start. Inspired from beneath, and not from above, its fire is fierce and withering; but it fights too fast and wildly. The good cause is stunned and staggered by the first onset; but by and by it rallies, warming as it works, and striking harder and harder till the field is won. How it comes to pass that the good cause at last carries the day, every good man knows, or ought to know. This secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. Every soldier in the field has an ally in every Christian closet; and he knows it. Every tent-fire blazes with the light of remembered hearth-stones. Every peal of the bugle is tremulous with the voices of wives and children. Every battle has its benediction from every altar of worship. And every triumph shall have its anthems from generation to generation. Good men thus armed are invincible. We need not await the bulletins; the end is sure.

III. And now let me say a few words about our own war.

We are tired of hearing it called gigantic, that word has been used so much. And yet the fact remains of a great war; the greatest, perhaps, in history. I need not tell you how great it is; great in the length and breadth of its theater; great in its host of armed men upon the land, great in its fleets upon the sea, great in its cost of treasure, great in its cost of

blood. So great is it, that had its dimensions been foreseen, the heart of the nation would have failed it. So great is it, that the hearts of many men have failed them as it is. So great is it, that only the most vivid sense of the still greater issues at stake in it will suffice to bear us through.

Cries of peace are on the wind. We heard them at the start. We have heard them all along. We hear them now louder than ever. But cries of peace from whom, and to whom? Some are the prayers of all the saints ascending since the war began, that God will be pleased, in his own good time, to send us peace by righteousness, that so it may be a lasting peace. But no cry is heard as yet from the rebels in arms, who might have peace to-morrow, by simply throwing down their weapons and striking their flag. No cry as yet from our own brave boys, their blue jackets fragrant with the smell of victories. No cry from the bloody graves of fallen heroes, who would as gladly fight and die again for the old flag. No cry even from widows and orphans, who have lost all they had to lose, and now only pray it may not have been in vain. Nowhere any cry do we hear, but from the lips of rebels not in arms, or who, if not rebels, are the dupes and the tools of rebels, doing the work of rebels, and doing it better now and here than though they had followed their hearts down over the lines. These are the men who now cry for peace at any price, peace on the instant by the grounding of our arms, when they know, some of them better even than we—for they have learned it from Richmond—that the rebellion is on the verge of grounding its arms. Peace, they cry, as over a drawn battle, when they know the battle is nearly finished in victory. Peace, they cry, when they know that peace now, without another blow, would be substantially the triumph of our foes. Some of these men who cry for peace are bold, bad men; as bold and as bad as Catiline. Others are only sensual and sordid, not willing to pay blood and gold for truth, freedom, and righteousness. Others are only timid, shrinking from further trial. Others, tired but not timid, are only mistaken, honestly thinking the war can be ended in no other way. Others, again, are only the rank and file of old political organizations, who know no other voice than that of their old shepherds. Taking them all together, their name is legion. They are found in all portions of the loyal States, and in numbers are probably about as strong, relatively, as the Tories of the Revolution; perhaps a little stronger. They are now, by the confession of the rebels themselves, the forlorn hope of their Confederacy. Foreign intervention was abandoned long ago as an idle dream. The rebellion is standing literally on its last legs; it has conscripted every thing it could lay its hands on that could be of any use to it between the cradle and the grave. The recruiting drum-beat would not be more out of place in the churchyards than in the streets of most of the Southern towns. A few thousands of men more on our side, and the thing is ended. Peace would then come, not by an armistice,

which would lead to no peace that could last, but by victories so overwhelming and conclusive that no man anywhere would dare to challenge the result. So says the Lieutenant-General of our armies, God bless him for his sublime tenacity of purpose, for his steadfast faith, for his many victories. So say all our best generals. So say all our best soldiers. And the rebels know it to be true. Only one hope now sustains them, and that is their hope of seeing yet at the eleventh hour, a divided and palsied North.

Shall they see it? Tell me, Christian friends and neighbors, tell me, my fellow-countrymen, shall they see it? This is now the grand question before us. And it is the only question. The question of slavery, in its relations to our politics, our industry, our religion even, is just now supremely impertinent: impertinent, I say, not because slavery can be cleared of the guilt of this rebellion, or can be thought compatible with the revived prosperity and permanent peace of the Republic, or can be looked upon with moral indifference by moral men; but simply because, by its own act, it now lies at the mercy of events which must have their course. Of the four millions of Southern bondmen at the beginning of this rebellion, more than one million—Mr. Davis has said nearly two millions—have been freed already. Others yet will snatch their freedom as our armies advance. And they would have snatched it all the same had there been no Proclamation of 1863. That military edict is, therefore, but a poor apology for turning against the Government now. Beyond all controversy, it has weakened the rebellion, and strengthened the Government; weakened the rebellion by making emancipation, not merely a military incident, but a well-advised and avowed purpose, in order to the quicker and surer triumph of our arms; strengthened the Government by all the thousands of colored troops now in its service, by arraying on our side the sympathies of the best men in Europe, and securing for ourselves the inspiration, not of patriotism alone, but also of philanthropy and the fear of God. To reenslave these freedmen would be not merely infamous, it would be insane. These, then, are wholly out of the problem. The eagles are uncaged, and gone. What shall be done with such as may not have been actually liberated along the paths of our armies, what shall be done with the institution of slavery itself—these are questions of the future, questions to be taken up and disposed of after the war is ended, and the Union, which, according to the loyal theory of the war, has never been dissolved, shall have been in fact restored. For the future, the immediate future, to which they belong, they are questions of the present moment. Perhaps we shall all soon feel them to be the crucial questions of our destiny. Perhaps the hour is nearer than some of us suppose, when the whole nation shall be standing in awe of Him whose office it is to say, Inasmuch as ye have done it, or have not done it, unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it, or have not done it, unto me. But just at this most critical conjuncture of

our affairs—just emerging, as we are, from the lowest depths of our despondency, the national brain oppressed, the national pulse feverish, and the spirits of mischief busy as never before—these questions are not in time. The only question now, if we are wise, is the question of war or armistice. This is the question offered us. Let us accept it, and hold its apostles to it, and hold ourselves to it, and hold each other to it, and hold the nation to it. If Ajax fails of victory for want of light, be it no fault of ours.

Armistice is the watch-word. But what is armistice? Not peace; only hostility suspended. But hostility suspended in order to peace, they tell us. Be not deceived, my countrymen. Peace will never come in this way. The rebellion is still in arms, engineered and dominated by able and desperate men, who have sworn, with an oath as stern as that of the famous *Delenda est Carthago*, that the old Union shall never be reestablished. This explains the remark of Mr. Davis, that they "are not fighting for slavery, and care very little about it." He did not mean that they are sick of the institution, and ready to give it up. He only meant, although of course too shrewd to own to it, that, with their independence established, and an open sea between themselves and the dusky continent, they will know how to make good the losses of the war. They are inflexibly resolved upon an independent Confederacy; and if, with their armies so well in hand, they can hold the Southern masses to that programme to-day, with those armies refreshed and re-supplied, they will be able to hold these same masses to that same programme to-morrow. The armistice will end, as it began, in an unqualified and stubborn demand for independence. They say they want nothing else, and will think of nothing else. If their demand be refused—as refused it must be, for I have read in a recent document that "the Union must be preserved at all hazards"—then it will be war again, only worse, and less likely by a thousand fold to end propitiously than now. If the demand be conceded, there may, indeed, be peace for a time, but war again after a season, and war for ever, till either our descendants learn the wisdom now offered to us, or the continent is black with ruins. What man in his senses can imagine for a moment the possibility of permanent amity, or any thing like it, between two such governments as would take the place of the one government now battling for its life? What man that wishes to plant, or spin, or trade, or study, would be willing to stay amidst such

uncertainties as would then be chronic? What mother would be willing to nurse her babe amidst such alarms as then would be nearly constant? Or is it supposed that there is still at the South a latent majority in favor of the old Union, who need only to be conciliated, who ask for a suspension of hostilities only that they may rid themselves of their present rulers and resume their place under the old flag? If there be any such latent majority, from what I know of human nature, I do not believe, for once, that they will either respect or like us any the less for having cut up this rebellion root and branch; a rebellion, with respect to which the chief question now is and ever will be, whether its rank is highest among the great historic blunders or among the great historic crimes.

No, my friends and countrymen, this proposed armistice will never do. After it would be the deluge. There is but one way of peace, and this is not it. The owl's eye hath not seen it; but Farragut hath found it upon the sea; and Grant and Sherman and Sheridan have found it upon the land. It is war; war with all our might now for a few weeks longer, till every rebel army is scattered, and our long-oppressed brethren of the South, insurgent against the leaders by whom they have been betrayed almost to utter ruin, cast those leaders down and sue for peace. Then shall we have peace indeed; thoroughly conquered, and sure to last. Doth any man deny, or doubt, the possibility of a conquered peace? He must be either a very disingenuous or a very dull student of history. History knows no other peace worth having than a conquered peace.

Such a peace is now possible to us. We have but to put forth our hands to it, hands clad in steel, and it is ours; ours, and our children's, for ever and for evermore. Then shall this continent, having ended its old life after the flesh, enter upon its new life after the spirit. We shall be cured of much that is now our weakness and our shame. With more and more of wealth, we shall be more and more mindful of its highest uses. With more and more of power, we shall be less and less boastful of it. Our soil, made sacred by such a baptism of fraternal blood, we shall tread more reverently; and this soil shall be too sacred for the feet of slaves. Christ himself shall sit regnant over us. Now he sends us the sword, because of our manifold offenses; but then will he give us peace.